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REVIEW

## Vasorelaxant effects of biochemical constituents of various medicinal plants and their benefits in diabetes

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**Specialty type:** Cardiac and cardiovascular systems**Provenance and peer review:**  
Invited article; Externally peer reviewed.**Peer-review model:** Single blind**Peer-review report's classification****Scientific Quality:** Grade B, Grade B**Novelty:** Grade B**Creativity or Innovation:** Grade B**Scientific Significance:** Grade A**P-Reviewer:** He YF, China**Received:** December 30, 2023**Revised:** March 7, 2024**Accepted:** May 6, 2024**Published online:** June 15, 2024**Processing time:** 163 Days and 21.6 Hours**Sadettin Demirel**, Medicine School, Physiology Department, Bursa Uludag University, Bursa 16059, Türkiye**Corresponding author:** Sadettin Demirel, BSc, MSc, PhD, Associate Professor, Medicine School, Physiology Department, Bursa Uludag University, Nilufer, Bursa 16059, Türkiye. [sdemirel@uludag.edu.tr](mailto:sdemirel@uludag.edu.tr)

### Abstract

Endothelial function plays a pivotal role in cardiovascular health, and dysfunction in this context diminishes vasorelaxation concomitant with endothelial activity. The nitric oxide-cyclic guanosine monophosphate pathway, prostacyclin-cyclic adenosine monophosphate pathway, inhibition of phosphodiesterase, and the opening of potassium channels, coupled with the reduction of calcium levels in the cell, constitute critical mechanisms governing vasorelaxation. Cardiovascular disease stands as a significant contributor to morbidity and mortality among individuals with diabetes, with adults afflicted by diabetes exhibiting a heightened cardiovascular risk compared to their non-diabetic counterparts. A plethora of medicinal plants, characterized by potent pharmacological effects and minimal side effects, holds promise in addressing these concerns. In this review, we delineate various medicinal plants and their respective biochemical constituents, showcasing concurrent vasorelaxant and anti-diabetic activities.

**Key Words:** Medicinal plants; Vasorelaxation; Endothelium; Diabetes; Anti-diabetic**©The Author(s) 2024.** Published by Baishideng Publishing Group Inc. All rights reserved.

**Core Tip:** To the best of our knowledge, this study is pioneering, offering a unique perspective that addresses both vasorelaxation and diabetes concerning medicinal plants. The comprehensive collection of medicinal plant references presented in this study is anticipated to serve as a valuable resource, inspiring and guiding future investigations into cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

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## INTRODUCTION

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), stemming from disorders affecting the heart and blood vessels, claim tens of millions of lives globally every year[1]. The cardiovascular system comprises the heart and three distinct types of blood vessels[2]. The inner surface of blood vessels is constituted by endothelial cells referred to as the tunica intima layer[3]. Endothelial cells envelop the interior of the vessel and establish interaction with the blood[2]. These cells function as a barrier between the vessel lumen and wall, preventing blood clotting, while mediators released from them exert vasoactive effects[4]. Impaired endothelial function and diminished endothelium-associated vasorelaxation contribute to the development of various cardiovascular disorders, including hypertension and diabetes[5]. Concurrently, diabetic vasculopathy manifests as endothelial dysfunction, characterized by endothelial injury and vascular wall thickening[6].

Hemodynamic forces, such as shear stress, impact endothelial cells, causing unidirectional deformation of endothelial cells[7]. The equilibrium between vasodilator and vasoconstrictor agents regulates vascular tone. Endothelial dysfunction further results in elevated vascular tone, leading to cardiovascular disorders such as hypertension[8]. Vasodilatory agents like endothelium-derived hyperpolarizing factor, nitric oxide (NO), and prostacyclin (PGI<sub>2</sub>) are produced by the endothelium in response to increased shear stress[9]. Various mechanisms, including the NO- cyclic guanosine monophosphate (cGMP) pathway, PGI<sub>2</sub>-cyclic adenosine monophosphate (cAMP) pathway, phosphodiesterase (PDE) inhibition, and the opening of K<sup>+</sup> ion channels/reduction of intracellular Ca<sup>2+</sup> levels, play crucial roles in vasorelaxation [10].

There are studies in the literature about the effects of medicinal plants on either vasorelaxation or diabetes. However, the absence of articles presenting the effects of medicinal plants on both vasorelaxation and diabetes necessitates the inclusion of this review in the literature. Addressing this gap will not only enhance our understanding but also aid in future studies on CVDs, as decreased vasorelaxation is a significant contributor to such conditions[11]. The mechanisms crucial for vasorelaxation are expounded upon in this review, along with accompanying figures. The review encompasses components and aspects of 85 medicinal plants, delineating their effects on vasorelaxation and diabetes in Table 1.

Several articles investigating the effects of plants on vasorelaxation are outlined below: Luna-Vázquez *et al*[12] identified 19 compounds isolated from 10 plants used in traditional Mexican medicine that can alter arterial smooth muscle tone. Guerrero *et al*[13] illustrated that different fractions obtained from two Latin American plants used in Amerindian traditional medicine possess vasorelaxation effects. Luna-Vázquez *et al*[14] elucidated the mechanism of action of 207 vasorelaxant metabolites. Capettini *et al*[15] discovered that xanthones derived from Brazilian medicinal plants exhibit vasorelaxant and antioxidant properties. Tang *et al*[16] highlighted traditional medicinal plants with the potential to prevent and treat hypertension, cardiovascular, and cerebrovascular diseases. Malekmohammad *et al*[17] reported on metabolites of medicinal plants that stimulate critical vasorelaxation mechanisms.

Additionally, numerous articles explore the effects of plants on diabetes: Kadir *et al*[18] documented an ethnobotanical survey on antidiabetic plants used in traditional Bangladeshi medicine. Salehi *et al*[19] identified numerous plants and their components effective against diabetes. Trojan-Rodrigues *et al*[20] identified plant species widely used in diabetes treatment in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil. Garima *et al*[21] conducted an ethnobotanical survey on anticancer and antidiabetic plants used by local tribes in Mizoram, Northeast India.

## NO-CYCLIC GUANOSINE 3', 5'-MONOPHOSPHATE GUANOSINE PATHWAY

Vascular smooth muscle cell (VSMC) is stimulated by NO that is produced in a catalyzed reaction, formed citrulline amino acid from arginine amino acid, by endothelial nitric oxide synthase (eNOS)[22]. The soluble guanylate cyclase receptor found in adjacent cells is activated by NO[23]. Thus, it is occurred to rise the level of cGMP, which forms vasodilation[10] (Figure 1).

## PGI<sub>2</sub>-CYCLIC ADENOSINE MONOPHOSPHATE PATHWAY

PGI<sub>2</sub>, which activates the prostacyclin receptor included in the G protein-coupled receptor (GPCR), functions as a vasorelaxant factor[24]. The enzyme cyclooxygenase catalyzes arachidonic acid as a substrate, forming prostaglandin H<sub>2</sub>, the precursor of PGI<sub>2</sub>[25]. Additionally, prostacyclin synthase generates PGI<sub>2</sub>, a lipid, when stimulated by various factors such as shear stress, cytokines, thrombin, and growth factors. The concentration of cAMP increases through the induction of adenylyl cyclase by PGI<sub>2</sub>[25]. Consequently, this leads to a vasorelaxation impact on VSMCs[26] (Figure 2).

**Table 1 Various medicinal plants with vasorelaxant activities and beneficial effects on diabetes**

Plant	Vasorelaxation			Diabetes			Ref.
	Component/extract	Part	Effect	Component/extract	Part	Effect	
<i>Securigera securidaca</i> L.	Hydroalcoholic extract	Seed	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation in hyper-cholesterolemic rats	Hydroalcoholic extract	Seed	Anti-diabetic	[61,62]
<i>Parkia biglobosa</i>	Aqueous extract	Seed	Smooth muscle vasorelaxation via endothelium due to PGs	Hydromethanolic extract	Stem bark	Anti-diabetic	[63,64]
<i>Orthosiphon stamineus</i>	Eupatorin	-	Endothelium-intact aortic ring vasorelaxation on contraction by KCl and endothelium-denuded aortic ring vasorelaxation on contraction by PE	Water extract, methanolic extract	Aerial parts	Anti-diabetic	[65,66]
<i>Rosa damascena</i> Mill.	2-phenyl ethyl alcohol	Spent flower	Vasorelaxation on rat aorta and mesenteric artery without vascular endothelium effect	Methanolic extract	Flower	$\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibitor	[67,68]
<i>Eruca sativa</i> Mill.	Crude extract, fractions	-	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation on aortic rings of normotensive rats and endothelium-independent vasorelaxation on aortic rings of hypertensive rats	Hexane fraction and its fatty acid-rich fraction	Leaf	Anti-diabetic	[69,70]
<i>Echinodorus grandiflorus</i>	Ethanol extract and its butanol fraction	Leaf	Vasorelaxation on resistance vessels by releasing PGI <sub>2</sub> and NO through B <sub>2</sub> -bradykinergic and endothelial M <sub>3</sub> -muscarinic receptors and then activating K <sup>+</sup> channels in vascular smooth muscle	Ethanol extract	Leaf	Antiglycation	[52,71]
<i>Gynura procumbens</i>	Aqueous extract, methanolic extract	Leaf	Vasorelaxation by activating muscarinic M <sub>3</sub> receptors in the existence of endothelium and vasorelaxation on rat thoracic aorta through cholinergic pathway	Leaf extract	Leaf	Anti-diabetic	[52,72]
<i>Garcinia cowa</i>	Leaf extract	Leaf	Vasorelaxation by activating K <sub>ATP</sub> and generating prostanooids and NO	Compounds 4 and 8	Leaf	$\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibitor	[73,74]
<i>Bauhinia forficata</i> Link	Ethyl-acetate plus butanol fraction, kaempferitrin, kaempferol	Leaf	Vasorelaxation on the thoracic aorta of hypertensive and normotensive rats	Methanolic extract	Leaf, stem	Hypoglycemic	[39,75]
<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i>	Extracts of spornioderm	Spornioderm	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation by activating PI3K-eNOS-sGC pathway	Seed extract	Seed	Hypoglycemic	[76,77]
<i>Cimicifuga racemosa</i>	Black cohosh extract		Vasorelaxation by way of endothelium-dependent and -independent mechanisms on pre-contracted rat thoracic aortic rings by NE	Extract Ze 450		Decreasing plasma glucose in ob/ob mice with diabetes	[78,79]
<i>Crocus sativus</i> L.	Crocin		Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation through endothelial NO	Crocins	Stigma	Decreasing levels of glucose and increasing expression of insulin in zebrafish embryo	[80,81]

<i>Morus alba</i>	Root bark extract	Root bark	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation partially via NO-cGMP pathway containing TEA sensitive K <sup>+</sup> channels activation	Kuwanon H, morin, morusin, oxyresveratrol, kuwanon G	Root bark	α-glucosidase inhibitor	[46,82]
<i>Erigeron breviscapus</i> Hand Mazz.	Scutellarin		Endothelium-independent vasorelaxation on thoracic artery rings by blocking the influx of extracellular Ca <sup>2+</sup> as independent from VDCCs	Scutellarin		Induces autophagy signal pathway by upregulating autophagy-related factors and blocks apoptotic signal pathway by downregulating apoptosis-related factors, and consequently relief of type 2 DC	[83,84]
<i>Vernonia amygdalina</i>	Ethanic extract	Leaf	Vasorelaxation by upregulating NO/cGMP and PGI <sub>2</sub> signalization pathways and modulating muscarinic and β <sub>2</sub> -adrenergic receptor levels, and Ca <sup>2+</sup> /K <sup>+</sup> channels	Leaf extracts	Leaf	α-amylase inhibitor	[54,85]
<i>Glycyrrhiza uralensis</i>	50% ethanolic extract		Vasorelaxation in endothelium-intact aortic rings pre-contracted with PE and KCl	Glycyrrhiza flavonoids	Root	α-glucosidase inhibitor	[86,87]
<i>Salvia miltiorrhiza</i>	<i>S. miltiorrhiza</i> extract		Vasorelaxation of renal, mesenteric, and femoral arteries at low extract concentration and vasorelaxation of coronary arteries at all extract concentrations tested	<i>S. miltiorrhiza</i> extract	Root	Hypoglycemic	[88,89]
<i>Sophora alopecuroides</i>	Oxysophoridine		Vasorelaxation on thoracic aorta rings by being related to K <sub>ATP</sub> and K <sub>V</sub> channels	Aloperine	Aerial parts	Hypoglycemic	[90,91]
<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	Coriander crude extract		Vasorelaxation on contracted rabbit aorta with PE and K <sup>+</sup> (80 mM)	Aqueous extract	Leaf, stem	α-glucosidase inhibitor	[53,92]
<i>Ligusticum chuanxiong</i> Hort.	Ethanic extract	Rhizome	Induction of eNOS-derived NO production	Ethanic extract	Rhizome	Amelioration of diabetic nephropathy	[58,93]
<i>Sorbus commixta</i> Hedl.	Methanolic extract	Cortex	Vasorelaxation on vascular smooth muscle through NO-cGMP pathway	Lupenone, lupeol	Stem bark	PTP1B inhibitor	[94,95]
<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	Conjugated cyanidins, chlorogenic acids	Juice	Inducing endothelial NO production in a coronary artery by getting eNOS phosphorylation due to redox-sensitive activation of the Src/PI3-kinase/Akt pathway		Juice	Hypoglycemic	[96,97]
<i>Annona squamosa</i>	Esquamosan	Leaf	Endothelium-independent vasorelaxation on isolated rat aorta via prevention of intracellular Ca <sup>2+</sup> increasing by blocking VDCCs and intracellular storage channels in VSMCs	Hexane extract		Hypoglycemic	[98,99]
<i>Artemisia herba alba</i>	Aqueous extract		Vasorelaxation through endothelial NO production	Aqueous extract	Leaf or bark	Lowering blood glucose levels	[100,101]
<i>Ajuga iva</i> (L.) Schreber (Labiatae)	Aqueous extract		<i>In vitro</i> , NO-mediated and NO-independent vasorelaxation; <i>ex vivo</i> , endothelium-independent vasorelaxation	Lyophilized aqueous extract	Whole plant	Hypoglycemic	[102,103]

<i>Mansoa hirsuta</i> D.C.	Ethanolic extract	Leaf	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation	Fraction	$\alpha$ -amylase inhibitor	[104,105]
<i>Mentha longifolia</i>	N-butanol fraction	Aerial parts	Endothelium-independent relaxation owing to increase of cAMP and cGMP levels by blocking diverse PDEs		Anti-diabetic	[40,106]
<i>Euphorbia humifusa</i> Willd.	Total flavonoids of <i>E. humifusa</i>		Vasorelaxation on rat thoracic aorta with endothelium-dependent NO-cGMP signaling by inducing PI3K/Akt-and $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ -eNOS-NO signaling pathway; relaxation of VSMCs by stimulating NO-sGC-cGMP-protein kinase G signaling via L-type $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ channel activity inhibition	Vitexin and astragalin	Whole plant	Anti-diabetic
<i>Sophora flavescens</i>	Ethanolic extract	Root	Relaxation of vascular smooth muscle via the endothelium-dependent NO-sGC-cGMP signaling pathway	Four minor flavonoids (1-4)	Root	$\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibitor
<i>Kaempferia parviflora</i>	Ethanolic extract	Rhizome	Vasorelaxation in a dose-dependent manner on aortic rings pre-contracted with PE			Anti-diabetic
<i>Angelica decursiva</i>	70% ethanolic extract	Root	Endothelium-independent vasorelaxation via $\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$ channels as well as blocking of $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ influx throughVDCCs and ROCCs	Coumarins 1-6		$\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibitor, PTP1B inhibitor
<i>Hintonia latiflora</i>	<i>H. latiflora</i> extract, neoflavanoid coutareagenin	Bark	Vasorelaxation on aortic rings pre-contracted with NE	<i>H. latiflora</i> extract, neoflavanoid coutareagenin	Bark	Diminishing blood glucose
<i>Kaempferia galanga</i> L.	Ethyl-p-methoxycinnamate	Rhizome	Endothelium-independent but $\text{K}^+$ channel-dependent vasorelaxation	Novel <i>K. galanga</i> rhizome essential oil rich in ethyl p-methoxy cinnamate	Rhizome	Anti-diabetic
<i>Prunus mume</i> Sieb. et Zucc.	70% ethanolic extract	Bark	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation on isolated rat aortic rings through NO/sGC/cGMP and $\text{PGI}_2$ pathway; vasorelaxation partially via $\text{K}_{\text{Ca}}$ , $\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$ , $\text{K}_V$ , and $\text{K}_{\text{ir}}$ channels	70% ethanolic extract	Leaf	Anti-diabetic
<i>Bacopa monnieri</i>	Saponins (bacoside A and bacopaside I), flavonoids (luteolin and apigenin)		Endothelium-intact vasorelaxation and endothelium-denuded vasorelaxation	Bacosine		Antihyperglycemic
<i>Haloxylon scoparium</i>	Aqueous extract		Vasorelaxation via $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ channels blockade	Decoctate, methanolic extract, macerated methanol, ethyl acetate extract	Aerial part	$\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibitor, $\alpha$ -amylase inhibitor, $\beta$ -asides inhibitor
<i>Swietenia macrophylla</i> King	50% ethanolic extract	Seed	Inhibiting $\text{IP}_3\text{R}$ , blocking VOCC and activating $\text{K}^+$ channels; vasorelaxation via $\beta_2$ adrenergic pathway and NO/sGC/cGMP signaling pathways	Limonoids	Fruit	Anti-diabetic
<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i>	Aqueous extract	Leaf	Dose-dependent vasorelaxation on aortic rings by inducing NO production			Amelioration of hyperglycemia
						[122,123]

<i>Plumeria rubra</i>	Aqueous-methanolic extract	Leaf	Concentration-dependent vasorelaxation on PE-induced spastic contractions and K <sup>+</sup> (80 mM)-induced spastic contractions	Compounds 1-4, 7, 8, and 16	Flower	$\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibitor, PTP1B inhibitor	[41,124]
<i>Prunus persica</i>	<i>P. persica</i> extract	Branch	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation <i>via</i> NO-sGC-cGMP, vascular PGI <sub>2</sub> , and muscarinic receptor transduction pathways; vasorelaxation partially through K <sub>ATP</sub> , BK <sub>Ca</sub> , and K <sub>V</sub> channels			Anti-diabetic	[19,125]
<i>Prunus yedoensis</i> Matsum.	Methanolic extract	Bark	Vasorelaxation due to activation of NO production through L-Arg and NO-cGMP pathways; vasorelaxation through blockade of extracellular Ca <sup>2+</sup> channels	<i>P. yedoensis</i> extract	Leaf	Antihyperglycemic	[126,127]
<i>Xanthoceras sorbifolia</i> Bunge	Ethanolic extract	Leaf	Vasorelaxation on vascular smooth muscle through Akt- and SOCE-eNOS-sGC pathways		Wood	$\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibitor	[128,129]
<i>Passiflora edulis</i>	Hydroethanolic extract	Fruit peel	Vasorelaxation on mesenteric artery rings <i>via</i> activation of K <sup>+</sup> channels	Aqueous extract	Fruit peel	Anti-diabetic	[129,130]
<i>Apium graveolens</i> L.	Seed extract	Seed	Vasorelaxation through inhibition of ROCCs and VDCCs, the release of EDHF, and activation of K <sub>V</sub> channels	Leaf extract	Leaf	Reducing pre-prandial blood glucose levels and post-prandial blood glucose levels in pre-diabetic elderly patients	[60,131]
<i>Phyllanthus niruri</i> L.	Methyl brevifolincarboxylate	Leaf	Inhibition of NE-induced vasoconstriction <i>via</i> ROCCs partially mediated by (Ca <sup>2+</sup> ) <sub>i</sub> decrease	Aqueous extract, ethanolic extract	Aerial part	$\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibitor	[132,133]
<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>	Crude extracts	Aerial part	Inhibiting KCl-induced contraction on the rat aorta	Aqueous extract		Anti-diabetic	[134,135]
<i>Psoralea corylifolia</i> L.	<i>P. corylifolia</i> extract, bakuchiol, isobavachalcone, isopsoralen, psoralen	Seed	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation through NO-cGMP pathway; attenuating PE-induced vasoconstriction by inhibiting TRPC3 channels in a dose-dependent manner	Compounds 1, 2, 3, 6, 8	Seed	DGAT1 inhibitor, $\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibitor	[57,136]
<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	Terpenoids (bilobalide, ginkgolides A, B, and C) and flavonoids (quercetin and rutin)		Concentration-dependent vasorelaxation	<i>G. biloba</i> extract		Antihyperglycemic	[137,138]
<i>Rubus chingii</i>	Ethanolic extract	Dried fruit	Vasorelaxation <i>via</i> Ca <sup>2+</sup> -eNOS-NO signaling in endothelial cells and later NO-sGC-cGMP-K <sub>V</sub> channel signaling in VSMCs	Ursane-type triterpenes	Fruit	PTP1B inhibitor	[55,139]
<i>Bidens pilosa</i>	Neutral extract	Leaf	Vasorelaxation and behaving as a Ca <sup>2+</sup> antagonist	<i>B. pilosa</i> formulation		Anti-diabetic	[140,141]
<i>Allium sativum</i>	L-arginine in aged garlic extract		Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation on the aorta by inducing NO formation	Silver nanoparticles	Bulb	Anti-diabetic	[142,143]
<i>Petroselinum crispum</i>	Aqueous extract	Aerial part	Vasorelaxation <i>via</i> VOCCs and ROCCs	<i>P. crispum</i> extract	Leaf	Decreasing blood glucose	[144,145]

<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Curcubisabolanin A	Rhizome	Partially endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation by regulating NO production in vascular endothelial cells <i>via</i> the PI3K/Akt/eNOS signaling pathway		Enhancing postprandial serum insulin levels with ingestion of 6 g of <i>C. longa</i>	[146,147]	
<i>Allium cepa</i>	<i>A. cepa</i> peel hydroalcoholic extract	Peel	Decreasing aortic contractions probably through depression of $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ influx from extracellular to intracellular, without including endothelium, NO, cGMP, and PGs		Diminishing blood glucose	[148,149]	
<i>Alpinia zerumbet</i>	Essential oil	Leaf	Vasorelaxation by inhibiting both $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ influx and $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ release from intracellular storage; vasorelaxant effect <i>via</i> NOS/sGC pathway	Labdadiene	Rhizome	Antiglycation	[43,150]
<i>Paeonia suffruticosa</i> Andr.	1,2,3,4,6-penta-O-galloyl-beta-D-glucose	Root cortex	Concentration-dependent vasorelaxation on rat aorta pre-contracted with PE	Extract of moutan cortex	Root	Improving inflammation in AGEs-induced mesangial cell dysfunction and high-glucose-fat diet and STZ-induced DN rats	[151,152]
<i>Nigella sativa</i>	Seed extract	Seed	Endothelium-independent vasorelaxation on contraction stimulated by PE and KCl <i>via</i> inhibition of extracellular $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ influx, $\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$ channels, and $\text{IP}_3$ -mediated receptors	Crude aqueous extract	Seed	<i>In vitro</i> , suppressing electrogenic intestinal absorption of glucose directly; <i>in vivo</i> , ameliorating both body weight and glucose tolerance after chronic oral administration in rats	[153,154]
<i>Myrciaria cauliflora</i> Berg	Hydroalcoholic extract	Fruit peel	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation <i>via</i> NO/sGC/cGMP pathway	<i>M. cauliflora</i> extract	Lyophilized fruit	Hypoglycemic	[155,156]
<i>Morus bombycis</i> Koidzumi	100% ethanolic extract	Root bark	Vasorelaxation on isolated rat aortic preparations	2,5-dihydroxy-4,3-di(beta-D-glucopyranosyloxy)-trans-stilbene	Root	Hypoglycemic	[157,158]
<i>Humulus lupulus</i> L.	Aqueous hop extract		Vasorelaxation through NOS activation, COX products, and $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ pathways in both male and female rats	Xanthohumol		$\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibitor	[159]
<i>Sesamum indicum</i> L.	Petroleum ether soluble fraction of root extract	Root	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation			Decreasing fasting blood sugar	[160,161]
<i>Hibiscus sabdariffa</i>	Hibiscus acid		Vasorelaxation by depression of intracellular $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ influx through VDCCs	Ethyl acetate extract, ethanolic extract, aqueous extract	Flower	Anti-diabetic	[162,163]
<i>Jasminum sambac</i>	Hydroalcoholic leaf extract	Leaf	Vasorelaxation completely on endothelium-intact rabbit aorta contracted with PE; vasorelaxation partially on endothelium-intact rabbit aorta contracted with NE	Polyphenol extract	Leaf	Preventing and having a therapeutic effect on DC	[59,164]
<i>Hancornia speciosa</i> Gomes	Ethanolic extract	Leaf	NO- and endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation on rat aortic preparations through PI3K activation	Aqueous extract	Latex	Hypoglycemic	[165,166]
<i>Pseuderanthemum</i>	Water extract	Leaf	Vasorelaxation <i>via</i> partially vascular	80% ethanolic leaf extract	Leaf	Hypoglycemic	[167,168]

<i>palatiferum</i>			endothelium not with NO production and muscarinic receptor activation				
<i>Terminalia superba</i>	Methylene chloride extract, methylene chloride-methanol extract	Stem bark	Vasorelaxation partially <i>via</i> depression of extracellular $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ influx and/or suppression of intracellular $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ releasing in VSMCs; vasorelaxation <i>via</i> endothelial NO	Methylene chloride-methanol extract	Leaf	Anti-diabetic	[49,169]
<i>Guazuma ulmifolia</i>	Procyanidin fraction	Bark	Vasorelaxation through endothelium-related factors, including NO	Aqueous extract		Anti-diabetic	[170,171]
<i>Persea americana</i> Mill.	Aqueous leaf extract	Leaf	Vasorelaxation through endothelial NO production and releasing	Hydroalcoholic extract	Leaf	Anti-diabetic	[172,173]
<i>Capparis aphylla</i>	Crude extract	Aerial part	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation partially <i>via</i> atropine-sensitive NO pathway; endothelium-independent vasorelaxation partially <i>via</i> the $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ channel blocking activity	Methanolic extract, active fraction	Stem	Decreasing blood glucose levels	[174,175]
<i>Rheum undulatum</i>	Piceatannol in rhizome extract	Rhizome	Vasorelaxation through endothelium-dependent NO signaling pathway	E-viniferin, piceatannol, and $\delta$ -viniferin in methanolic extract	Rhizome	PTP1B inhibitor	[176,177]
<i>Globularia alypum</i>	<i>G. alypum</i> extract		Vasorelaxation due to EDHF <i>via</i> endothelial muscarinic receptor activation	Methanolic extract, water extract	Leaf	Reducing fasting blood glucose	[178,179]
<i>Gmelina arborea</i>	Hexane extract	Leaf	Concentration-dependent vasorelaxation on isolated rat aorta	Aqueous extract	Bark	Antihyperglycemic	[50,180]
<i>Coscinium fenestratum</i>	<i>C. fenestratum</i> extract		Endothelium-dependent and -independent vasorelaxation on isolated aortic rings precontracted with PE and KCl	Alcoholic stem extract	Stem	Anti-diabetic	[181,182]
<i>Myrtus communis</i> L.	Crude methanolic extract	Aerial part	Vasorelaxation on isolated rabbit aorta preparations contracted with PE and $\text{K}^+$	Volatile oil		Hypoglycaemic	[183,184]
<i>Thymus linearis</i> Benth.	N-butanolic fraction	Aerial part	Endothelium-independent vasorelaxation due to increase in cAMP and cGMP <i>via</i> inhibition of several PDEs	Ethyl acetate extract, combined extract	Aerial part	A-amylase inhibitor	[185,186]
<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>	<i>V. agnus-castus</i> extract	Fruit	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation <i>via</i> NO/cGMP and PGs production in the aorta	Hydroalcoholic extract	Desiccated fruit	Hypoglycemic	[51,187]
<i>Anogeissus leiocarpus</i>	Aqueous extract	Trunk bark	Endothelium-dependent NO-mediated vasorelaxation on porcine coronary arteries <i>via</i> redox-sensitive Src/PI3-kinase/Akt pathway-dependent activation of eNOS	Supernatant fraction, total extract	Root	Anti-diabetic	[188,189]
<i>Zanthoxylum armatum</i> DC	Tambulin in methanolic extract	Fruit	Influencing directly vascular smooth muscle through cAMP and/or cGMP-related relaxing pathways	Fruit, bark, and leaf extracts	Fruit, bark, and leaf	Anti-diabetic	[190,191]
<i>Cymbopogon martinii</i>	Crude methanolic extract	Leaf	Partial vasorelaxation on isolated rabbit aortic preparations contracted with PE and			A-glucosidase inhibitor	[192,193]

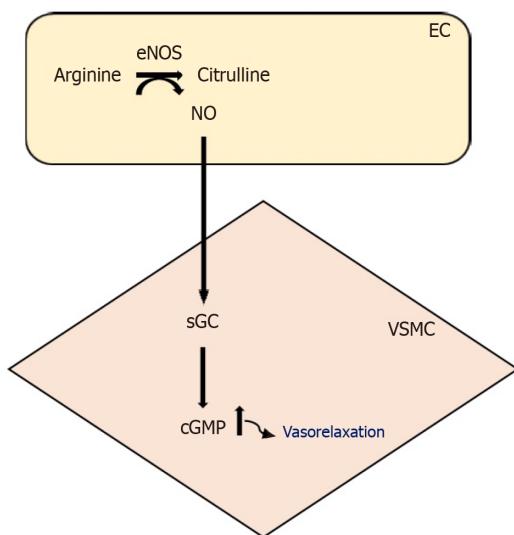
<b>K<sup>+</sup></b>						
<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	<i>M. oleifera</i> leaf extract	Leaf	Endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation through EDHF-mediated hyperpolarization; endothelium-independent vasorelaxation due to inhibition of extracellular Ca <sup>2+</sup> influx through VOCCs and ROCCs and suppression of sarcolemmal Ca <sup>2+</sup> releasing through IP <sub>3</sub> R Ca <sup>2+</sup> channels	Methanolic extract	Pods	Anti-diabetic
<i>Dalbergia odorifera</i> T. Chen	Butein		Vasorelaxation on rat aorta; the novel cAMP-specific PDE inhibitor; vasorelaxant action related intact endothelium	Compounds in ethyl acetate soluble fraction	Heartwood	α-glucosidase inhibitor
<i>Coptis chinensis</i>	Berberine		Decreasing expression of miR-133a; enhancing BH4 levels and production of NO	Polysaccharide		Anti-diabetic
<i>Angelica keiskei</i>	Xanthoangelol, 4-hydroxyderricin, xanthoangelol E and F in EtOAc-soluble fraction, xanthoangelol B in EtOAc-soluble fraction	Root	Blocking PE-induced vasoconstriction through EDRF/NO synthesis and/or attenuation of PE-induced (Ca <sup>2+</sup> ) <sub>i</sub> increase; blocking PE-induced vasoconstriction by reducing (Ca <sup>2+</sup> ) <sub>i</sub> increase and directly inhibiting smooth muscle contraction	Flavonoid-rich ethanolic extract	Leaf	Hypoglycemia
<i>Scutellaria baicalensis</i> Georgi	Baicalin		Vasorelaxation on the mesenteric artery by stimulating BK <sub>Ca</sub> channels and blocking VDCCs with endothelium-independent mechanisms, moreover by inducing cGMP/PKG and cAMP/PKA pathways	Root polysaccharide	Root	α-amylase inhibitor, α-glucosidase inhibitor
<i>Ocimum gratissimum</i>	Essential oil		Dose-dependent vasorelaxation on resistance blood vessels of rat mesenteric vascular beds completely via NO; dose-dependent vasorelaxation on rat aorta partially mediated by NO	Chicoric acid in leaf extract	Leaf	Hypoglycemic

<sup>1</sup>The first reference is associated with vasorelaxation and the second with diabetes.

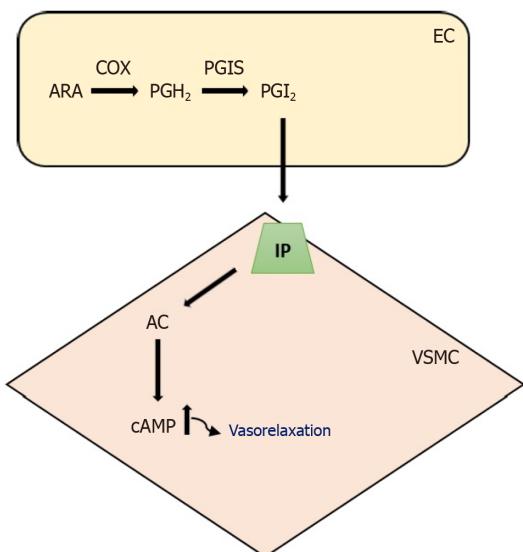
ACh: Acetylcholine; AGEs: Advanced glycation end-products; BH4: Tetrahydrobiopterin; BK<sub>Ca</sub> channel: Large-conductance Ca<sup>2+</sup>-activated K<sup>+</sup> channel; COX: Cyclooxygenase; DGAT1 inhibitor: Diacylglycerol acyltransferase-1 inhibitor; DC: Diabetic cardiomyopathy; DN: Diabetic nephropathy; eNOS: Endothelial nitric oxide synthase; EDHF: Endothelium-derived hyperpolarizing factor; EDRF: Endothelium-derived relaxing factor; EtOAc: Ethyl acetate; IP<sub>3</sub>R: Inositol triphosphate receptor; K<sub>ATP</sub> channel: ATP-sensitive K<sup>+</sup> channel; K<sub>Ca</sub> channel: Ca<sup>2+</sup> activated K<sup>+</sup> channel; K<sub>ir</sub> channel: Inward rectifier-type K<sup>+</sup> channel; K<sub>v</sub> channel: Voltage-sensitive K<sup>+</sup> channel; NO: Nitric oxide; NE: Norepinephrine; PDE: Phosphodiesterase; PE: Phenylephrine; PG: Prostaglandin; PGI<sub>2</sub>: Prostacyclin; PI3K: Phosphatidyl-inositol 3-kinase; PKA: Protein kinase A;PKG: Protein kinase G; PTP1B inhibitor: Protein tyrosine phosphatase 1B inhibitor; ROCC: Receptor-operated Ca<sup>2+</sup> channel; sGC: Soluble guanylate cyclase; SOCE: Store-operated Ca<sup>2+</sup> entry; STZ: Streptozotocin; TEA: Tetraethylammonium; TRPC3 channel: Transient receptor potential canonical 3 channel; VDCC: Voltage-dependent Ca<sup>2+</sup> channel; VOCC: Voltage-operated Ca<sup>2+</sup> channel; VSMC: Vascular smooth muscle cell.

## PDE INHIBITION

cGMP and cAMP, serving as second messengers in the cell, are hydrolyzed by cyclic nucleotide PDEs<sup>[27]</sup>. In this manner, PDE enzymes facilitate the breakdown of cAMP into 5'-AMP and cGMP into 5'-GMP. Preventing PDE activation results in heightened concentrations of cyclic nucleotides, such as cAMP and cGMP, promoting vasorelaxation<sup>[28]</sup> (Figure 3).



**Figure 1 Vasorelaxation effect of nitric oxide-cyclic guanosine monophosphate pathway.** cGMP: Cyclic guanosine monophosphate; EC: Endothelial cell; eNOS: Endothelial nitric oxide synthase; NO: Nitric oxide; sGC: Soluble guanylate cyclase; VSMC: Vascular smooth muscle cell.



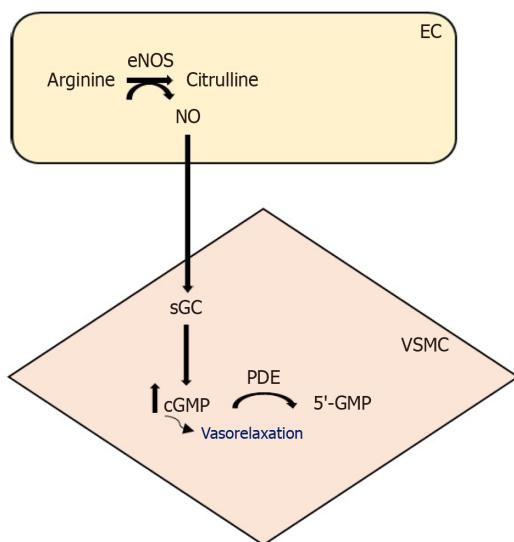
**Figure 2 Vasorelaxation effect of PGI<sub>2</sub>-cyclic adenosine monophosphate pathway.** AC: Adenyl cyclase; ARA: Arachidonic acid; cAMP: Cyclic adenosine monophosphate; COX: Cyclooxygenase; EC: Endothelial cell; PGI<sub>2</sub>: Prostacyclin; IP: Prostacyclin receptor; PGIS: Prostacyclin synthase; PGH<sub>2</sub>: Prostaglandin H<sub>2</sub>; VSMC: Vascular smooth muscle cell.

## OPENING K<sup>+</sup> ION CHANNELS AND REDUCING CA<sup>2+</sup> LEVELS IN CELLS

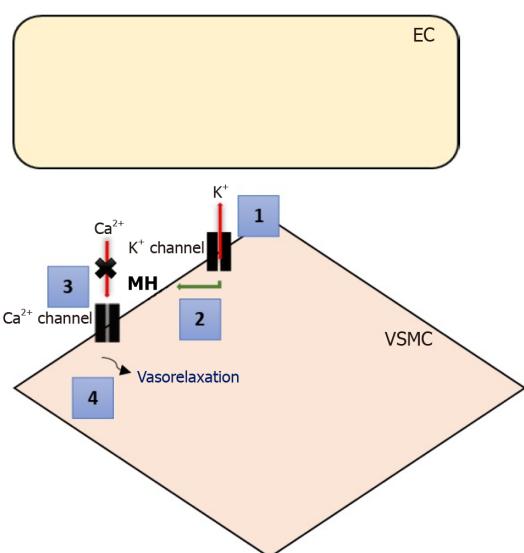
VSMCs harbor different K<sup>+</sup> channels, including voltage-sensitive K<sup>+</sup> (K<sub>v</sub>) channels, inward rectifier-type K<sup>+</sup> (K<sub>ir</sub>) channels, ATP-sensitive K<sup>+</sup> (K<sub>ATP</sub>) channels, and Ca<sup>2+</sup>-activated K<sup>+</sup> (K<sub>Ca</sub>) channels[29]. Activation of K<sup>+</sup> channels induces membrane hyperpolarization, leading to the cessation of voltage-dependent Ca<sup>2+</sup> channels' (VDCCs) activity, blocking the entry of Ca<sup>2+</sup> into the cell, and ultimately resulting in vasorelaxation[30]. Additionally, the relaxation of VSMCs occurs when receptor-operated Ca<sup>2+</sup> channels or VDCCs, responsible for intracellular calcium ion procurement, are blocked[31].

Diabetes mellitus (DM), a metabolic disease, affected 425 million patients in 2017. The World Health Organization predicts that diabetes will become the seventh leading cause of death by 2030[32]. The major cause of morbidity and mortality in people with diabetes is CVDs. Adults with diabetes face a 2-4 times higher cardiovascular risk compared to those without diabetes[33]. Type 1 DM, characterized by beta cell failure in pancreatic islets and decreased insulin release, is prevalent among teenagers and children[34]. On the other hand, type 2 DM (T2DM), defined by insulin resistance and hyperglycemia, is non-insulin dependent[35]. While T2DM is predominantly observed in adults, there is an increasing incidence among children due to the rising prevalence of obesity[36].

Throughout history, numerous drugs have been derived from the use of medicinal plants. Plants exhibiting effective pharmacological effects with minimal side reactions are preferred for various diseases due to advantages such as economic feasibility and accessibility[37]. This review article highlights medicinal plants' effectiveness on vasorelaxation



**Figure 3 Vasorelaxation effect of phosphodiesterases inhibition.** cGMP: Cyclic guanosine monophosphate; EC: Endothelial cell; eNOS: Endothelial nitric oxide synthase; 5'-GMP: 5'-Guanylic acid; NO: Nitric oxide; PDE: Phosphodiesterase; sGC: Soluble guanylate cyclase; VSMC: Vascular smooth muscle cell.



**Figure 4 Vasorelaxation effect of opening K<sup>+</sup> ion channels/reduction of Ca<sup>2+</sup> levels in the cell.** EC: Endothelial cell; MH: Membrane hyperpolarization; VSMC: Vascular smooth muscle cell.

and diabetes, emphasizing their potential benefits for CVDs. Given the lack of existing literature on medicinal plants' impact on vasorelaxation and diabetes, this review aims to address this knowledge gap[38] (Figure 4).

## MEDICINAL PLANTS AND THEIR FORMATIONS WITH BOTH VASORELAXANT ACTIONS AND AFFIRMATIVE EFFECTS ON DIABETES

This section focuses on medicinal plants related to vasorelaxation and diabetes, as presented in Table 1. Each herb, identified by its binomial name, categorizes its effects concerning vasorelaxation and diabetes. Formulations such as extracts, fractions, compounds, flavonoids, oils, formulations, and polysaccharides obtained from each medicinal plant are detailed in the table. Examples include the methanolic extract from *Bauhinia forficata* Link[39], n-butanol fraction from *Mentha longifolia*[40], compounds 1-4, 7, 8, and 16 from *Plumeria rubra*[41], total flavonoids from *Euphorbia humifusa* Willd [42], essential oil from *Alpinia zerumbet*[43], formulation from *Bidens Pilosa*[44], and polysaccharide from *Coptis chinensis* [38].

The table indicates whether vasorelaxation is linked to the endothelium or not, and pathways and channels are also highlighted, such as *Gynura procumbens*[45], *Morus alba*[46], *Prunus mume* Sieb. et Zucc[47], *Swietenia macrophylla* King[48].

Moreover, medicinal plants exhibit diverse specialties in diabetes (**Table 1**). Examples include anti-diabetic effects with *Terminalia superba*[49], anti-hyperglycemic effects with *Gmelina arborea*[50], hypoglycemic effects with *Vitex agnus-castus* [51], anti-glycation effects with *Echinodorus grandifloras*[52],  $\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibitor activity with *Coriandrum sativum*[53],  $\alpha$ -amylase inhibitor activity with *Vernonia amygdalina*[54], protein tyrosine phosphatase 1B (PTP1B) inhibition with *Rubus chingii*[55],  $\beta$ -galactosidase inhibition with *Haloxylon scoparium*[56], and diacylglycerol acyltransferase-1 (DGAT1) inhibitory effects with *Psoralea corylifolia* L[57].

In addition, **Table 1** demonstrates that medicinal herbs possess desirable efficacies on diabetic nephropathy, diabetic cardiomyopathy, and prediabetes, exemplified by *Ligusticum chuanxiong* Hort[58], *Jasminum sambac*[59], and *Apium graveolens* L[60], respectively (**Table 1**[61-204]).

## CONCLUSION

This review article delves into the intersection of vasorelaxation and diabetes within the realm of medicinal plants. Each medicinal herb examined here is intricately connected with both topics, with the overarching aim of providing a promising perspective on cardiovascular disorders. The study reports on various vasorelaxant action mechanisms, encompassing endothelium-dependent and -independent vasorelaxation, observed in various experimental studies in conjunction with medicinal plants.

The review highlights that several medicinal herbs can mitigate the undesirable effects of diabetes, drawing upon extensive literature scans. These herbs exhibit a spectrum of properties, including being anti-diabetic, anti-hyperglycemic, hypoglycemic, promoting insulin expression, anti-glycation, alpha-glucosidase inhibition,  $\alpha$ -amylase inhibition, PTP1B inhibition,  $\beta$ -galactosidase inhibition, and DGAT1 inhibition. Furthermore, the study underscores the influence of medicinal plants on affirmative outcomes in diabetic nephropathy, diabetic cardiomyopathy, and pre-diabetic conditions. In studies focusing on the anti-diabetic activity of medicinal plants, an effectiveness rate of 81% is observed when plant selection is based on ethnobotanical records and traditional folk use. However, this rate decreases to 47% in the case of random plant selection[205]. Most studies investigating the efficacy of medicinal plants on diabetes reveal that total plant extract is more effective than pure secondary metabolites in the extract composition[206].

The reported effects on vasorelaxation and diabetes encompass a wide array of plant components, such as extracts, compounds, fractions, oils, formulations, flavonoids, and polysaccharides, derived from various parts of these plants. To the best of our knowledge, this study is pioneering, offering a unique perspective that addresses both vasorelaxation and diabetes concerning medicinal plants. The comprehensive collection of medicinal plant references presented in this study is anticipated to serve as a valuable resource, inspiring and guiding future investigations into CVDs and diabetes.

In this study, 85 species from 79 genera across 41 plant families were investigated. The majority of the medicinal plants examined belong to families such as Lamiaceae, Fabaceae, Rosaceae, Apiaceae, and Asteraceae, implying a potentially higher therapeutic efficacy in treating and preventing cardiovascular diseases compared to other families. Moreover, employing species from these families in cardiovascular disease studies could result in cost and time savings. The plant species and their respective families are presented in **Table 2** for reference.

**Table 2** Familial classification of various medicinal plants with vasorelaxant activities and beneficial effects on diabetes

Fabaceae	Lamiaceae	Rosaceae	Brassicaceae	Myrtaceae
<i>Securigera securidaca</i> L.; <i>Parkia biglobosa</i> ; <i>Bauhinia forficata</i> Link; <i>Dalbergia odorifera</i> T. Chen; <i>Glycyrrhiza uralensis</i> ; <i>Sophora alopecuroides</i> ; <i>Sophora flavescens</i> ; <i>Psoralea corylifolia</i> L.	<i>Orthosiphon stamineus</i> ; <i>Thymus linearis</i> Benth; <i>Gmelina arborea</i> ; <i>Vitex agnus-castus</i> ; <i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> ; <i>Marrubium vulgare</i> ; <i>Salvia miltiorrhiza</i> ; <i>Mentha longifolia</i> ; <i>Scutellaria baicalensis</i> Georgi; <i>Ajuga iva</i> (L.) Schreber	<i>Rosa damascena</i> Mill; <i>Sorbus commixta</i> Hedl; <i>Aronia melanocarpa</i> ; <i>P. mume</i> Sieb. et Zucc.; <i>Prunus persica</i> ; <i>P. yedoensis</i> Matsum.; <i>Rubus chingii</i>	<i>Eruca sativa</i> Mill.	<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i> ; <i>Myrciaria cauliflora</i> Berg; <i>Myrtus communis</i> L.
Alismataceae	Asteraceae	Nelumbonaceae	Clusiaceae	Apocynaceae
<i>Echinodorus grandiflorus</i>	<i>Gynura procumbens</i> ; <i>E. breviscapus</i> Hand Mazz.; <i>Vernonia amygdalina</i> ; <i>Artemisia herba alba</i> ; <i>Bidens pilosa</i>	<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i>	<i>Garcinia cowa</i>	<i>Plumeria rubra</i> ; <i>Hancornia speciosa</i> Gomes
Iridaceae	Moraceae	Apiaceae	Annonaceae	Sapindaceae
<i>Crocus sativus</i> L.	<i>Morus alba</i> ; <i>Morus bombycis</i> Koidzumi	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i> ; <i>Angelica decursiva</i> ; <i>Apium graveolens</i> L.; <i>Petroselinum crispum</i> ; <i>L. chuanxiong</i> Hort.; <i>Angelica keiskei</i>	<i>Annona squamosa</i>	<i>Xanthoceras sorbifolia</i> Bunge
Poaceae	Bignoniaceae	Euphorbiaceae	Zingiberaceae	Passifloraceae
<i>Cymbopogon martinii</i>	<i>Mansoa hirsuta</i> D.C.	<i>E. humifusa</i> Willd.	<i>Kaempferia parviflora</i> ; <i>Kaempferia galanga</i> L.; <i>Curcuma longa</i> ; <i>Alpinia zerumbet</i>	<i>Passiflora edulis</i>

Rubiaceae	Plantaginaceae	Amaranthaceae	Meliaceae	Phyllanthaceae
<i>Hintonia latiflora</i>	<i>Bacopa monnieri; Globularia alypum</i>	<i>Haloxylon scorarium</i>	<i>S. macrophylla</i> King	<i>Phyllanthus niruri</i> L.
Moringaceae	Ginkgoaceae	Amaryllidaceae	Paeoniaceae	Ranunculaceae
<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	<i>Allium sativum; Allium cepa</i>	<i>P. suffruticosa</i> Andr.	<i>Nigella sativa; Coptis chinensis; Cicimicifuga racemosa</i>
Cannabaceae	Pedaliaceae	Malvaceae	Oleaceae	Acanthaceae
<i>Humulus lupulus</i> L.	<i>Sesamum indicum</i> L.	<i>Hibiscus sabdariffa; Guazuma ulmifolia</i>	<i>Jasminum sambac</i>	<i>P. palatiferum</i>
Combretaceae	Lauraceae	Capparaceae	Polygonaceae	Menispermaceae
<i>Terminalia superba; Anogeissus leiocarpus</i>	<i>Persea americana</i> Mill.	<i>Capparis aphylla</i>	<i>Rheum undulatum</i>	<i>Coscinium fenestratum</i>
Rutaceae				
<i>Z. armatum</i> DC				

## FOOTNOTES

**Author contributions:** Demirel S designed the project and wrote the manuscript.

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